IELTS BAND 9

VOCAB SECRETS



Cambridge IELTS Consultants

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The Ten Essential IELTS Vocabulary Topics
With Definitions
Ten Model Essays
and
Examples for IELTS Speaking

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Contents

Introduction from the authors

There are two parts of the IELTS exam in which the test asks some questions and you must create independent responses: the Speaking Test and the Writing Test. Many people do not realise that the IELTS system uses a group of ten key topics to formulate all of these questions in Speaking and Writing. If you understand these ten topics, and above all if you know some advanced vocabulary on each topic to use in your Speaking and Writing answers, you can make a huge difference to your IELTS Band score, even if your English contains some mistakes.

This book introduces you to these ten IELTS topics. Each of our ten modules summarises the various elements of a topic, and gives an example Academic Task 2 Writing Task exactly like the ones you will see in the exam. It also explains how to answer the writing Task. Each module then teaches a large amount of vocabulary related to the module topic, contained in a Band 9 model essay so that you see how the words are used in IELTS Writing.

Each module has a clear-to-follow definition of each word or phrase, and a further example of how to use these topic words again in the Speaking part of the test, so that you are ready to use the vocabulary in both Writing and Speaking.

If you are not yet familiar with the different types of IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 essays, please start by reading our 'Overview' from the table of Contents. If you have already read our other books on this concept, please go straight to the Topic Modules to begin expanding your IELTS vocabulary.

If you are not yet familiar with the different parts of the IELTS Speaking test, please consider reading our Band 9 Speaking book for help, either before or after you finish this book.

If you need a dictionary while using this book, we recommend the free *Cambridge Dictionaries Online* from Cambridge University Press.

Don't just trust to luck in your IELTS exam – the key is expert advice!

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How to use this book

This book will teach you a very large amount of vocabulary of exactly the type that the IELTS examiners want to see and hear from you in the exam, covering the ten IELTS topics. It is important that you prepare to answer questions on *all* of these ten topics, because they all may be used in the test. Therefore, do not start by trying to remember all the words from Module 1, then all the words from Module 2 and so on.

Try to learn and practise a small number of words from Modules 1 to 10 at first, and then a slightly larger group of words from Modules 1 to 10, and so on. In this way, you will develop a wide IELTS vocabulary on all the topics, and not become a ‘specialist’ in just one topic.

FAQs about the IELTS vocabulary topics

Why does the IELTS exam use these ten topics all the time?

The IELTS test managers believe that these topics are the most suited to advanced, academic discussion in the world today, and also that people who take IELTS should have a reasonable understanding and interest regarding these areas.

I see that one Topic is about 'Agriculture,' for example. I know little about this, even in my native language. Is this a problem?

No! Remember that in IELTS Speaking and Academic Writing, you are not expected to know specialised technical words or understand complex issues. The vocabulary expected is what a normal person can meet when reading the media, newspapers, popular websites and magazines on these subjects. Don't worry if you think some of these topics seem too advanced – the vocabulary that we show you will enable you to answer questions in these areas quite easily, with some practice.

Do I need to remember all of the words in this book?

You should try to remember a group of words on each topic, and practise using them in your writing and speaking. People have different styles of memory, of course. We believe that a typical IELTS candidate should be able to learn and use at least ten new words and phrases for each of the ten topics. This should make a massive difference to the strength of your IELTS Writing and Speaking.

Will this book help me with the Reading and Listening IELTS tests?

Yes, because the ten topics are also used to formulate the Reading and Listening materials. The Reading and Listening papers will additionally contain some quite specialised vocabulary, but the IELTS tests are carefully designed so that you should be able to get a high band even if you don't know this more specialised language.

Topic 1: Work and careers

About Topic 1

The **Work and careers** topic includes issues of opportunities and problems at work, ways of motivating and rewarding workers, the work/life balance, changes in patterns of jobs and work (for example, the growth in working from home), career choices and training, and occasionally the relationship between government and businesses or industries.

You are not expected to know any vocabulary connected to specialised areas of finance, marketing and so on.

Topic 1 Example Task

Some employers offer their employees subsidised membership of gyms and sports clubs, believing that this will make their staff healthier and thus more effective at work. Other employers see no benefit in doing so.

Consider the arguments from both aspects of this possible debate, and reach a conclusion.

Explanation of the Task

This is an Opinion>Discussion type Task. You should introduce the topic, present two or three ideas on each side of the discussion, and then give your opinion in the conclusion.

If you are not already familiar with the different types of IELTS Academic Task 2 essay, please see the 'Overview' at the end of this book. It is essential to be familiar with these different essay types before you take the exam.

The following model essay shows you key words and phrases which you can use to increase your band score when discussing this topic, in both writing and speaking. The key words are **highlighted in bold**.

Band 9 model essay

Employers are always seeking ways to enhance their employees' **productivity**, and **subsidising** healthy pursuits may be one way of achieving this. There are arguments on both sides, however, which we will discuss here.

On the one hand, it might be said that if workers are fitter and less stressed, their working time will be more efficient, leading to higher levels of **output** and service. Furthermore, the **work/life balance** of the staff will hopefully be improved, because their leisure time will be more fulfilling. This may even be more **motivating** than **pay increments, perks,** or **financial rewards** such as **bonuses** or **incentives** which may be hard to attain. Finally, feeling healthier may lead to better **job satisfaction** which is in itself a motivating factor.

Conversely, the problem with such leisure-based subsidies is that their efficacy is virtually

impossible to quantify. For example, with **target-related** payments, employers can at least see whether the objectives are reached or not. It might also be said that, if this budget was spent on (for instance) **on the job training** or **day release programmes**, the employees would achieve better **career progression** and have better **job prospects.** These matters are all easier to **measure**, especially in **performance reviews** and **appraisals,** and may even help to reduce the risk of **redundancy** if the company **restructures, downsizes** or **outsources** its **workforce.**

Overall, it seems that, while health-related subsidies are **superficially** attractive, the lack of **measurability** is a substantial drawback. Spending funds on **ongoing training** would appear to be a better use of company or **Human Resources** budgets.

(259 words)

<u>Explanation of the topic vocabulary and examples in Speaking</u>

<u>These words and phrases are listed in the order that they appear in the essay</u>

productivity = the ability of people to produce useful results at work.

Example of using this vocabulary item in the IELTS Speaking Test:

'My country is not as advanced as some other countries in our industrial sector. Productivity and quality are still quite low.'

Important: Please remember that these extra example sentences are designed to show you ways of using this vocabulary in IELTS Speaking, and so the examples may include contractions ('*don't'* etc) and personal stories about the speaker and their family or friends. This is fine in the Speaking test, but not in Task 2 writing, which should never have contractions or personal stories.

These Speaking examples also sometimes include less formal words such as 'really' or 'good.' Again, these words are acceptable in Speaking, but try to use more formal words in Writing, such as 'substantially' or 'positive.'

to subsidise = to pay part of the cost of something, usually in order to help people.

Example of using this vocabulary item in the IELTS Speaking Test:

'The government could encourage children to be healthier by subsidising swimming lessons and sports coaching at weekends.'

output = the amount of work or goods produced.

In Europe, industrial output has decreased, maybe because of competition from producers in other continents.

work/life balance = the ability to work hard but also enjoy a good quality family and social life

People are working long hours these days, and so their work/life balance is affected, leading to stress.

to motivate people = to give them positive reasons for working hard

If employees are given regular feedback, they will probably be well motivated and committed.

pay increments = pay rises/increases

In my country, pay increments have been very low because of the financial crisis.

perks = reward from an employer which are not financial (eg free lunches, a car etc)
Personally, I'd like to work for a company that gives lots of perks, because I would find this very enjoyable.

financial rewards = any form of money payment (salary, commission, pension etc)
Being a primary teacher may be satisfying, but the financial rewards are not high

bonuses = money given in addition to salary, usually in return for achieving targets

Apparently some investment bankers can earn millions of dollars in bonuses.

incentives = any reward that makes people work harder

Some employers offer vacations or parties as incentives if the team hits its sales targets.

job satisfaction = enjoyment of a job for non-financial reasons

I get a lot of job satisfaction from my work at the wildlife centre, although the financial rewards are quite low.

target-related = dependent on hitting a target

My boss once offered me a target-related bonus, but it was almost impossible to achieve!

on the job training = training while working, not by leaving work to go to college etc

My sister has found that the on the job training she gets at her bank is very useful, and she has progressed well because of this.

ongoing training = training throughout your time in a job, not just at the start

I enjoyed my work at the airline at first, but I soon found that there was no ongoing training and my skills weren't really developed.

day release programmes = programmes of training or education when employees can spend entire days out of work

I feel that employers should be much more flexible regarding training, for example by subsidising day release programmes or job exchanges with other companies.

career progression = the ability to advance your career

The problem with being a freelance photographer is that there's no real career progression, unless you become very famous.

job prospects = the possibility of promotion or higher level work in future

I remember an interview when the employer told me there were excellent job prospects in their firm for young people. In reality, this was not really true.

to measure = to assess the dimensions of something

Job satisfaction may be important, but can we really measure it?

superficial = not addressing deep or important issues

I'm not a big fan of traditional music. I find the lyrics rather old-fashioned and superficial for modern listeners.

performance reviews/appraisals = meeting at which an employer gives feedback to a worker on their work over a fixed period.

I remember being worried about my job at first, but at my six month appraisal my manager told me she was pleased with my efforts.

redundancy = a situation where a worker loses their job because of changes in the company (not because of personal mistakes) (verb = to make someone redundant)

In my home town, the textile factories have closed and many people have been made redundant.

to restructure = to change the organisation of a company, usually in order to make it more

effective or to save money.

We used to have a large training department in my office, but in our recent restructure it was eliminated and the staff were made redundant.

to downsize = to make an organisation smaller and employ fewer people

My father's college used to employ almost one thousand people, but then it downsized and now has less than five hundred.

to outsource = to stop doing work inside the company and send it to other companies or other countries, usually to save money

Many American companies have outsourced their IT operations to Asian countries, where productivity is similar and salaries are lower.

the workforce = the total number of people working in an organisation, company or country

The workforce in Northern Europe is skilled, but it's also inflexible and much older than in other parts of the world.

Human Resources (or HR**)** = the department in a company which manages recruitment, employment and training

When I graduate, I plan to work in the Human Resources area of the oil industry, possibly in the Middle East.

<u>Summary of Topic 1</u>

This completes our Module for Topic 1.
Remember, please don't try to learn or memorise *all* of these words immediately. Go through the whole book from Module 1 to 10, and try to practise using a small group of words from all of the Modules, then go back and expand on each group.

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Topic 2: Education and schooling

About Topic 2

The Education and schooling topic includes teaching methods and resources, approaches to exams and testing, school management, pupil motivation, behaviour and discipline, school sport, extra-curricular activities, higher/further education and course funding.

Topic 2 example Task

'The Internet will never replace traditional course books in schools.'
How far do you agree with this prediction?

Explanation of the Task

This is an Opinion>Personal viewpoint type essay (it asks how far you agree with an idea.) You should introduce the topic and give your opinion in the introduction, then explain why you have this view. You should briefly consider the opposing view, then restate your opinion in the conclusion.

Notice how this essay type is different from the Opinion>Discussion type which we saw in Topic 1, which asks you to *discuss* both sides of a debate.

Band 9 model essay

There is a huge range of resources available to the modern teacher, and the right selection is crucial in delivering effective lessons. I agree that there will always be a place for course books in the school **curriculum**, despite the many benefits of the Internet.

Firstly, course books (whether conventional or digital) have been developed by **pedagogical** experts and designed to be incorporated into a subject **syllabus,** leading to testing procedures such as **formal examinations** or **continuous assessment**. This means that they are proven to improve students' **academic achievement**, enhancing their potential for progression to **further** or **higher education.** Furthermore, the use of modern course books allows pupils to coordinate their studies as part of **group work**, hopefully making their lessons less **teacher-led** and more about **autonomous learning**. This in itself teaches **study skills** such as independent research and **synthesising sources**, rather than old-fashioned **rote-learning.** This is where the Internet, in fact, can play a useful part: to **supplement** and add to **knowledge** which the students are **assimilating** via their course books. However, it is the role of teachers and school management generally to ensure that use of the Internet remains a **guided learning** process, and not an exercise in **data-gathering** from Internet sources which may be unreliable or even misleading.

It is true that the Internet can be invaluable for adults (for example in **distance learning** or **self-study** modules) who are able to **discriminate between sources** and **sift information** to **marshal their facts**. However, this is a mature skill and we should not assume that school age pupils are ready to do this.

Overall, it appears that course books, with their quality and depth of material, are set to remain **an integral part of the syllabus**. The internet can be judged a useful supplement to this, if used carefully and **under supervision**.

(304 words)

Explanation of the topic vocabulary and examples in Speaking

curriculum = the full range of subjects offered by a school or group of schools

The curriculum in private schools is sometimes wider than in state schools, because they have more resources.

pedagogical (experts) = (experts in) education and teaching

I admire pedagogical pioneers such as the Victorian English thinkers who began free schools for all children.

syllabus = the content of elements taught in a specific subject

The syllabus for geography at my school included volcanoes, earthquakes and tidal waves, which we found fascinating.

formal examinations = exams where students answer set written or spoken questions without assistance

continuous assessment = giving students marks for course work or projects, rather than formal exams

At my school, our grades were based 50/50 on formal examinations and continuous assessment, which we thought was very fair to all the children.

academic achievement = the measurable performance of a student in marks, exam results etc

In my country, children enjoy school, but academic achievement is frankly quite low.

further education = education after leaving school at the minimum age

Some governments encourage further education by allowing teenagers to claim benefits while they study.

higher education = education after age 18 at college or University, usually for a Degree

When I pass IELTS, I plan to go on to higher education in Canada and do a degree in

engineering.

group work = study where pupils discuss and agree a project together

Personally, I think that group work enables lazy children to do less work than the eager ones.

teacher-led lessons = traditional lessons where the teacher delivers a long talk and the students take notes

In my country, lessons are still very teacher-led and interaction is rather limited.

autonomous learning = when a student learns through independent study and research

At University, you are expected to be an autonomous learner far more than at High School, which is quite exciting for me.

study skills = the skills of organising, using and checking study work

My study skills were rather weak until I read an excellent book by a Japanese pedagogical expert.

to synthesise sources = to use a variety of sources and combine them in one project

I use the Internet to synthesise my sources, and I always cite the origin of the information. (to cite sources = to acknowledge publicly)

rote-learning = learning by repetition and memorising items

I used to think that rote-learning was a negative approach, but my recent experiences teaching in a South African school have changed my view.

to supplement = to add extra content or material

My supervisor said that I should supplement my essay with more examples of experiments.

to assimilate knowledge = to absorb and understand it

I always use a dictionary when I study in English, to help me assimilate new phrases.

guided learning = learning under the supervision of a teacher

Lessons in Primary Schools should always contain guided learning, otherwise the children will lose focus.

data-gathering = collecting information, usually in numerical form

Mobile phone companies employ many people in data-gathering Tasks, to see how users are using the phones and Internet.

distance learning = learning by the Internet or email, rather than face-to-face

My mother took an entire degree by distance learning over a period of five years.

self-study = studying using a course without a teacher's involvement

There are many self-study guides to improving your English, and some of them are actually quite good.

to discriminate between sources = to decide whether one source is better or more reliable than another source

Children should not study using unsupervised Internet access, because they can't discriminate between the sources of information they find.

to sift information = to remove unwanted or less useful information

I had to sift hundreds of pages of data to arrive at my conclusions when I did my thesis.

to marshal facts = to organise facts in support of an idea

In IELTS essays, you should marshal a few facts to support each idea in the argument.

an integral part of the syllabus = essential, central or indispensable

Nutrition is an integral part of food sciences these days

to work/study under supervision = under the direction of a responsible person

At college, I discovered I did not have to work under supervision all the time, and I was free to do independent research.

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Topic 3 Children and families

About Topic 3

The **Children and families** topic includes child psychology and development, ways of bringing up children, family discipline, child care, preschool learning, parental roles, family structures and roles (for example nuclear or extended families), adolescence, teenagers and elderly family members.

Important: Please remember that the topics are used in different ways in the Writing and Speaking parts of the IELTS test.

In the Academic Writing test Task 2, you should present ideas or opinions about society in general, but not about your personal life. In the Speaking test, the examiner will always ask you **both** about society in general (in Speaking part 3) **and also** about your personal life, country and background (in Speaking parts 1 and 2.)

With controversial topics such as 'families' and 'health,' some candidates become confused about this difference, but it's absolutely essential to remember if you want to achieve a very high Band!

Topic 3 example Task

Some people believe that children should spend all of their free time with their families. Others believe that this is unnecessary or even negative. Discuss the possible arguments on both sides, and say which side you personally support.

Explanation of the Task

This is another Opinion>Discussion type Task. You should introduce the topic, present two or three ideas on each side of the discussion, and then give your opinion in the conclusion. Remember that these Opinion>Discussion Tasks might be expressed in different ways; look for the instruction key word 'discuss' and its synonyms such as 'debate,' 'consider' and 'review.'

Band 9 model essay

Nobody can deny that parental influence is important for children, at least in cases where children live with their parents, **foster parents** or **guardians**. However, it is by no means clear that children should spend time exclusively in the family, as we will see.

On the one hand, it may appear advisable for parents to act as **role models** and to establish **ground rules** for behaviour by spending as much time as possible with their children. This allows the youngsters to **absorb conventions** and **codes of conduct** which they can then follow themselves, hopefully leading to an absence of problems such as **bullying, truancy** and **delinquency** later on. Furthermore, being with the family should reduce the risk of children falling victim to crimes such as

abduction, or coming under the influence of negative **peer pressure.**

On the other hand, we have to ask whether this is a practical proposition. In a society where many families are **dual-income**, or where one parent's role as **breadwinner** means he/she is away from the family for long periods, it is inevitable that children cannot spend all of their time with the family. **Child-minding** and **after-school childcare** are often used in these cases, and if managed properly, these can be perfectly **viable** alternatives. Equally, it seems that children can in some cases learn a considerable amount from their **peers** in addition to adults, and allowing them to play without direct supervision may be a benefit.

To conclude, it appears that, while family time is essential for **bonding** and **absorbing patterns of behaviour**, there are definite advantages when children are outside the family too. This is provided that they are in a safe, well-behaved environment with peers who are themselves reasonably **well brought-up**.

(287 words)

Explanation of the topic vocabulary and examples in Speaking

foster parents = people who have children living in their existing family for a fixed period, with the original parents' agreement

Being a foster parent is a difficult and tiring role, I can imagine.

guardians = people who are legally appointed to protect a child's interests in the absence of parents

In some countries, the government appoints a guardian if the parents die or experience severe difficulties.

role models = people that children look to and respect as good examples

In some countries, the royal family are good role models for youngsters, although in other cases this is not the case.

ground rules = basic rules governing the way people can behave in a situation

During the school holidays, my parents had strict ground rules for what we could do outside.

conventions = traditions or social norms that most people follow

It's a convention for grandparents to live with their children in many countries.

codes of conduct = voluntary rules which people accept in a situation

The Boy Scouts have a firm code of conduct, which seems to be a positive influence.

bullying = when children attack and intimidate other children

Bullying could be reduced through better awareness and positive peer pressure in schools.

truancy = when a pupil leaves school without permission (verb = to play truant from school)

I must confess that at secondary school I sometimes played truant and went to the park with my friends.

delinquency = minor crime (often by young people)

Delinquency is a huge problem in urban areas, especially when policing is minimal.

abduction = the crime of taking or kidnapping people for a criminal reason

Child abduction is a great concern for many parents, especially in South America.

peer pressure = the pressure from people in the same group to act in a certain way

Many children start smoking due to peer pressure or bad role models.

dual-income = a family where both the father and mother work

In many countries, the dual-income family is the norm nowadays.

breadwinner = the person who earns all or most of the money in a family

In some families, the father is still the only breadwinner.

child-minding = caring informally (not in schools) for children when parents are busy or working

In some countries, the state subsidises the costs of child-minding.

after-school childcare = caring for children in a school setting, as above

Many families rely on after-school childcare because both parents work and commute.

viable = practical and possible to achieve

It is not really viable to expect all children to get maximum grades in exams.

peers = people in the same group or level as yourself

Many of my peers from school are now working for charities.

bonding = the development of close emotional connections between people

Festivals and parties are an ideal time for families to bond.

patterns of behaviour = ways of acting and doing things (either positive or negative)

Unfortunately, some children absorb dangerous patterns of behaviour when watching movies or playing computer games.

well brought-up (to bring up children = to raise and educate them in your own moral, behavioural or religious conventions)

I was brought up in a very religious family, and I seem to have absorbed their values.

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Topic 4: Nature, the environment and energy

About Topic 4

The **Nature, the environment and energy** topic includes fossil fuels and renewable fuels, climate change, threats to the environment (deforestation, pollution etc) and their effects, the biosphere, and animal life/human attitudes to animals.

In this topic, remember to show that you can write in an impersonal, academic way, even if you feel strongly about something. Remember that emotional words such as *terrible, shocking, disgusting* or *wonderful, fantastic, brilliant* cannot be used in Academic English essays of this type. You can use Academic English such as *regrettable, worrying, inadvisable* or *admirable, helpful, invaluable* instead, which are more accepted in these situations.

This topic is often used for Ideas>Cause/effect type Tasks.

Topic 4 example Task

Pollution of rivers, lakes and seas is a major concern for people who seek to protect the environment. What are the possible causes of water pollution, and what effects does this have on animal life and human society?

Explanation of the Task

This is an Ideas>Causes/effects type Task. It does not ask for your opinion, but it wants you to think of some possible ideas on the topic. You should introduce the topic, describe two or three causes, then two or three effects, and then summarise briefly.

Band 9 model essay

Water **contamination** is a serious form of pollution, and one that can be challenging to rectify. There seem to be two main causes involved, and a variety of damaging effects on people and **the biosphere**, which we will discuss here.

Probably the main factor is the issue of **emissions** from cars, factories and other human activities. These emissions contain damaging **pollutant particles** which can contaminate rainwater **run-off** and thus enter **the water cycle**, by transferring through the water table into **aquifers**, streams and rivers. **Filtration** and processing are not really viable options for such large volumes of water, and so the **water table** remains **tainted** with these elements over long periods, as we see in Eastern Europe today. In situations where **soil erosion** and **logging** have already damaged the local environment, the accumulation can be very serious. The other major cause is accidental or deliberate **dumping** of **waste** products in places outside of controlled **landfills** or **waste processing** centres. Even small amounts of abandoned waste can enter water supplies through the ground, often undetected.

The effects on animal life can be severe, especially for species which are already endangered

by such threats as **poaching, habitat loss** and **food chain** disruption. Contaminated water can lead to **dwindling numbers** or even potential **extinction**, as may indeed happen to the Asian tiger populations. The impact on human society can also be distressing, including the poisoning of drinking water, **famine** or **drought** due to lack of safe **irrigation**, and long-term loss of land as we see, for example, after the Bhopal poisoning **catastrophe** in India. Such effects tend to have an especially grave impact on the very poorest in society, with the least resources to counter the environmental effects.

Overall, we see that emissions and dumping are the main origins of the problem, and that the effects on both humans and animals are **exacerbated** by the existing environmental, criminal or social problems.

(316 words)

<u>Explanation of the topic vocabulary and examples in Speaking</u>

contamination = pollution by poisons or dangerous elements

The atmosphere in large cities is often contaminated by smog, as we can see in China.

the biosphere = the relationship between all living things on the planet

Children should be educated on the biosphere through field trips and practical experiments.

emissions = gases entering the atmosphere

Scientists spend their whole careers studying the effect of emissions on the climate.

pollutant particles = microscopic elements of pollution

I remember going to a factory and seeing the snow covered with pollutant particles.

run-off = water that runs from the ground into rivers and lakes

We should try to collect and use more run-off water, to avoid having to recycle water so much.

the water cycle = the natural process of water moving from clouds to rain and seas

Scientists believe the water cycle is responsible for various natural events, especially in coastal areas.

aquifers = underground, natural water stores

My family have a well which connects to an aquifer, giving very pure water.

filtration = the process of filtering and removing impurities

Water filtration might be a solution to water shortages in very hot countries.

water table = the layer of water below ground

In my town, the water table is very high, and water will appear in even a small hole.

tainted = polluted or contaminated

The Mediterranean is badly tainted in some areas by sewage pollution.

soil erosion = the loss of soil by wind and rain activity

Deforestation has increased soil erosion seriously in Brazil.

logging = cutting down trees for timber and industrial use

Logging has endangered many species throughout the world.

dumping = leaving waste deliberately without storing or treating it

In most countries, dumping rubbish is a criminal offence.

waste = any material not wanted or needed after a process

In my country, we use waste from cotton manufacture for lighting fires.

landfills = organised areas where waste is buried in the ground

Surprisingly, Britain still sends most of its domestic waste to landfill sites.

waste processing = recycling or reducing waste into manageable forms

My brother has a waste processing company, which is subsidised by the local authority.

poaching = illegally hunting and killing animals

Elephant poaching should be a much higher priority for the world authorities, as elephants are an endangered species.

habitat loss = destruction or disappearance of an animal's natural home

Logging has caused substantial habitat loss for wildlife in many countries.

food chain = the natural system of animals eating other animals and plants

The food chain has been disrupted by the loss of certain species, with widespread impacts on all animals.

dwindling numbers = (to dwindle = to steadily decline in quantity)

States seem to have dwindling funds to pay for animal sanctuaries, although they are still able to pay for government officials and their perks.

extinction = the final death of all animals in a species

Dinosaur extinction may have been caused by a meteor or volcano, but scientists seem unsure about this.

famine = a situation where there is a lack of food in an area for a long time

Many singers help make charity songs to raise funds for famine relief.

drought = similar to famine, but a lack of water

Drought in central Africa can continue for many years, apparently.

irrigation = supplying water to land for agriculture

If we want quick solutions to famine, better irrigation and farming methods would probably be the first step.

catastrophe = a great disaster affecting many people

The continuing destruction of the rain forests is a catastrophe for the global biosphere.

exacerbated (= to exacerbate = to make an existing problem worse, accidentally or deliberately)

Famine in Africa has been exacerbated by civil war and political instability.

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Topic 5: Culture, art and traditions

About Topic 5

The **Culture, art and traditions** topic includes human folklore, ceremonies and rituals, myths and legends, social customs, traditional languages, dress and arts, the impact of modern life on traditional lifestyles and differences in national habits.

Please remember that IELTS will not ask specifically about religion, politics or spiritual beliefs, and you should not base your answers in the Writing or Speaking tests on your personal beliefs in these areas. For example, if the Task asks whether you agree with a certain idea, you would get a low mark if you say *'Yes, because my religion agrees with it/ because my President has this policy'* or similar.

You can certainly use religious or political situations as evidence or examples to support an argument, but not as a starting point. For example, '*We should give money to charity because it benefits society, as we can see for example in countries where religious observance requires people to do this regularly.*' This is a more logical and academic way to respond.

Topic 5 example Task

In many countries, traditional dress and costumes are considered effective ways of maintaining links with the past. How effective can traditional costumes be, in this sense?

What other ways exist to help citizens connect with a country's past?

Explanation of the Task

This is an Ideas/Evaluate type essay.

It does not ask for your opinion about whether costumes are good or bad, but it asks for you to decide whether these costumes are effective (or not effective) ways of maintaining links with the past, and to suggest other ways of connecting to the past. You should say how effective costumes are, with examples and evidence, and then compare their effectiveness to some other possible ways of connecting to the past.

Remember that 'Ideas/Evaluate' means that you should compare things in the way that they are used in society, but not decide on your personal preference about these things.

Band 9 model essay

Most people would agree that **preserving** connections with our past is an admirable objective, especially as the world evolves so rapidly. I feel that traditional costumes are one part of doing this, but they are by no means the most important, as we shall see.

Admittedly, historic dress plays a key role in social events such as religious **rituals** or military **parades**, and these events are helpful in **transmitting social memes** such as **public duty** and **self-sacrifice.** Traditional costumes also remind us of the origins of **cultural traditions and mythologies**, for instance the historic Swiss national dress which **evokes** their **medieval** independence.

However, it must be said that costumes are an accessory in these situations, and do not appear to constitute the central message. It is the **ceremonies** themselves which convey the **cultural norms** that help to maintain **the fabric of society.** In this sense, the costumes are of secondary importance. Furthermore, it seems that there are in fact much more powerful ways in which culture is **conserved** and **handed down** between the generations. Most countries have a rich **heritage** of **legends** and **folklore** about the birth and development of their nation, some of which are mythological and some being grounded in truth (as we see in the English stories about Robin Hood or George and the Dragon, for example.) These stories are a **cultural inheritance** which embodies important symbols and concepts far more effectively than dress. Similarly, we must remember the significance of art and music in passing on our traditions, in **forms** ranging from **fine art** to **handicrafts**, and from **opera** to traditional **shanties** and **dirges.** The presence of visual or **linguistic** messages in these **media** make them more effective than costumes, which convey no language.

Overall, we must recognise and welcome the use of traditional dress in helping to maintain our cultures. However, the forms of story, art and music would appear to be the driving forces in this invaluable process.

(321 words)

<u>Explanation of the topic vocabulary and examples in Speaking</u>

to preserve = to protect and keep something, usually because it is valuable for some reason

The state preserves ancient buildings because they are part of our heritage.

rituals = highly traditional ceremonies which have meaning for the participants

In some countries, wedding rituals continue for several days.

parades = organised processions in public by groups of people, usually to commemorate an event

In my home town, we have a military parade each year to mark our Independence Day.

to transmit = to communicate a message, literal or symbolic

The monarchy transmit symbols of power through dress and ritual.

social memes = social habits or patterns which are transmitted between people

In Britain, punctuality is a social meme.

public duty = the willingness to serve the public or the state

Civil servants need a sense of public duty.

self-sacrifice = the willingness to suffer or die for a cause

We remember the self-sacrifice of our wartime generation each year.

cultural traditions = traditions carrying cultural importance

Hospitality is a great cultural tradition in Mediterranean countries.

mythology, myth = a classic story from the past which people know is not true but which carries meaning

There are old myths about gigantic animals in my part of the countryside.

to evoke = to bring back memories or feelings

Our national flag evokes strong emotions whenever we see it.

medieval = adjective for the Middle Ages, roughly 1050 to 1400 in European history

France has some superb medieval architecture, which I saw on my gap year.

ceremonies = a ceremony is similar to a ritual, usually involving people in authority

The government enters office with a long ceremony at the presidential palace.

cultural norms = standards expected of behaviour or ideas

In some countries, marriage between cousins is a cultural norm.

the fabric of society = the way that society is connected and maintained

drugs and crime are damaging the fabric of society.

to conserve = a synonym for 'to preserve'

Conservation of old treasures is the main role of our city museum.

to hand something down (from one generation to the next) = to pass it from parents to children and to their children etc

Cultural values have been handed down for hundreds of years, but now they are starting to

disappear.

heritage = something inherited (= received/handed down) by one generation from the previous generation

Our countryside is part of our national heritage and we should preserve it carefully.

legends = similar to myths, but sometimes containing an element of reality

Robin Hood is a British legend, although most historians agree the character is based on a real person.

folklore = old stories and myths/legends, usually transmitted verbally

African folklore is rich in stories of gods and monsters.

inheritance = a synonym for 'heritage'

Our greatest inheritance as a nation is our independence and fighting spirit.

fine art = art by famous or acclaimed painters

Florence in Italy is a key destination for lovers of fine art.

handicrafts = skills of making objects by hand, and also the objects themselves

Many indigenous people make a living by selling handicrafts to tourists.

opera = a very formal play with a musical score

La Scala is the name of a famous opera venue in Italy, which I'd like to visit.

shanties and **dirges =** very traditional songs about basic subjects

Children sometimes sing shanties at primary school.

linguistic = the adjective meaning 'about language'

Linguistic skills are essential for a tour guide in the modern economy.

media = a way of communicating

Folklore is a very effective media for transmitting our cultural heritage.

(The phrase 'the media' is used to mean all the newspapers, broadcasters, websites and magazines commenting on issues in a country: *The president resigned due to pressure from the media, who disliked his policies*)

***

Topic 6: Healthcare, health and sport

About the topic

The **Healthcare, health and sport** topic includes health problems and disabilities (physical and mental), ways of keeping fit and healthy, diet/nutrition and exercise, ways of providing (and educating people about) healthcare and health services, medical innovations and treatments, the benefits and management of common sports.

This is one topic especially where you need to remember **not** to give personal stories about yourself or people that you know in the Task 2 Writing!

Topic 3 example Task

Many doctors are concerned about the high use of computer games by children and young people. What mental and physical problems may arise from excessive use of these games? How could these problems be reduced?

Explanation of the Task

This is an Ideas>Problem/solution type Task.
It does not ask about whether computer games are good or not, but about your ideas regarding possible mental and physical problems due to excessive use, and also any solutions that you can think of.
You should introduce the topic, describe two or three problems, then two or three solutions, and then summarise. Notice that the Task asks about mental and physical problems, so you should say something on each type of problem.

Band 9 model essay

Children appear to enjoy playing video games, and while there are undoubted benefits, various negative effects **stem** from this too. Let us consider the main issues, and then outline possible remedies.
Perhaps the major physical problem is the **sedentary lifestyle** which these games encourage, meaning that youngsters may incline to **obesity** or **inadequate development.** Added to this is the **strain** on eyesight resulting from excessive use of screens and consoles, meaning that children may suffer **symptoms** of poor vision. There are also concerns about **impairment** of reflexes due to the repetitive nature of the hand muscles when playing these games, and about the **poor diet** of **convenience food** which often accompanies this lifestyle.
The most alarming psychological impact of such activities is possibly the risk of **addiction**, meaning that children become obsessed with the games and are unable to **socialise** with family or peers. This undermines their **interpersonal skills** and makes them **underperform** both academically and socially.

Turning to possible solutions, perhaps the immediate step would be to promote a more **active lifestyle** through exercise **regimes** or sports **programmes** which would help to **detoxify** the lifestyles of children affected. This could be done through **sponsorship** of sports, or **participation** in **competitive** events such as races or matches, hopefully **ameliorating the physical effects** of excessive games use. Potential **remedies** for the danger of mental addiction may be, firstly, an **initiative** to **raise awareness** of the risks of the situation, for example through **health warnings** on games packaging or through high-profile spokespersons spreading such a message. For example, if sports **champions** or **figureheads** speak out about these dangers, the message may well get through to children.

To sum up, the risks posed by excessive gaming are connected to an unhealthy lifestyle and the possibility of **dependency** on the activity. Possible answers might involve stronger education about the dangers and the health benefits of more active **pursuits**.

(313 words)

Explanation of the topic vocabulary and examples in Speaking

to stem from = to come or derive from, often used for negative things

A lot of delinquency these days stems from the use of drugs or alcohol.

sedentary lifestyle = a lifestyle where people sit for long periods and are generally inactive

I used to keep fit, but since I started working as an architect my lifestyle had become mostly sedentary.

obesity = the medical condition of being seriously overweight

In some countries, obesity is the major cause of death among young adults.

inadequate development = insufficient or obstructed growth of the body

If children smoke, this can cause inadequate development of their lungs and brains.

strain = stress or overwork, physical or mental

I had to take a vacation due to the strain of working such long hours.

symptoms = indications that a medical problem is present

A sore throat and headache are symptoms of a cold or flu.

impairment (verb = to impair **=** to hinder or damage an ability)

His hearing was impaired when he heard a loud explosion as a child.

poor diet = a lifestyle diet without sufficient nutrients

Malnutrition happens due to a poor diet and lack of medical care.

('a diet' can also mean a programme of reduced calories intended to help you lose weight: '*My sister is always trying new diets because she wants to lose 2 kilos before the summer*')

convenience food = food which is cooked in its packaging, usually in a microwave

British and American people eat a large amount of convenience food.

addiction = the state of being unable to live without something

Many young people are addicted to social media or Internet use.

to socialise = to meet with friends and other people in a friendly way

At weekends, I like to socialise at parties and in cafes with my old friends.

interpersonal skills = the skills of dealing with people successfully

My boss used to be very annoying, but then he went on a course to develop proper interpersonal skills.

to underperform = to perform below your peers or expectations

My football team are underperforming badly this year.

active lifestyle = a lifestyle with proper exercise and fitness

The government tries to promote an active lifestyle, but this is not successful.

a regime, a programme = a planned system of exercise, diet or sport

I adopted a vegetarian regime for three months before my exams.

('regime' also means a very strict government: *'In the 1970's, many South American countries were ruled by police regimes.'*)

to detoxify your body = to remove impurities and poisons

I went to a clinic to detoxify because I was eating too much fatty food.

sponsorship = payment from a company to a sport or other activity in return for publicity

Motor racing is often sponsored by energy drink brands.

participation = to participate in something = to join and take part in it

I participated in wrestling when I was at college, but then I gave up.

competitive = the adjective of 'competition'

Canadians are very competitive about ice hockey teams.

ameliorating the physical effects = to ameliorate = to make a problem less damaging

The effects of his injury were ameliorated by extensive physiotherapy.

remedies = cures or answers to a problem or situation

There are many remedies for cold and flu available in pharmacy stores.

an initiative = a new programme or idea, usually in government or business

We need initiatives to tackle obesity, anti-social behaviour and delinquency.

raise awareness = to make people more aware of or caring about an issue

We organised a marathon to raise awareness of heart disease and ways to prevent it through exercise.

health warnings = notices on cigarette or alcohol packaging warning about the medical effects

Almost all countries have health warnings on tobacco these days.

champions = highly successful people in sport or business

Roger Federer is a champion tennis player, and a good role model too.

figureheads = people who represent part of society, officially or unofficially

The singer Adele is a figurehead for many young women these days.

dependency = the condition of relying on something in an addictive way

The player was treated for drug dependency at a detox clinic in Paris.

pursuits = hobbies or sports which people do for enjoyment

Skiing and cycling are my main pursuits at weekends.

***

Topic 7: Global challenges

About Topic 7

The **global challenges** topic includes economic issues, their impact on people and society, changes in demographics, movements of populations between countries and inside countries, long term trends in population and industry, severe global problems such as famine, drought and malnutrition, and also the possible causes of all these issues, their effects and possible solutions to them.

There are often connections between this topic and the other topics, especially **4 Nature, the environment and energy, 8 Cities and infrastructure, 9 The countryside and agriculture, and 10 Government and the authorities.** This means that you may sometimes need to combine vocabulary from two (or possibly three) topics to answer a Task. For example, a Task may ask about the effect of economic problems on the countryside, and you would then use vocabulary from Topics 7 and 9.

Topic 7 example Task

'Unemployment remains the biggest challenge to school-leavers in most countries'

How far do you agree with this assessment? What other challenges face young people today?

(school-leavers = young people who leave school without going on to further studies.)

Explanation of the Task

This is another Opinion>Personal viewpoint type essay (it asks how far you agree with an idea.) You should introduce the topic and give your opinion in the introduction, then explain why you have this view. You should briefly consider the opposing view, then restate your opinion in the conclusion. This particular Task has an extra element, which sometimes happens in Task 2: it asks you to suggest some other challenges also. You should combine these ideas in the main body of the essay, as in the example below.

Band 9 model essay

Youth unemployment is certainly a worrying **challenge** for most countries, especially at a time of **economic instability** and **social unrest**. However, to say that this is the largest **issue** is to overlook a range of equally **pressing matters,** as we will discuss now.

It must be admitted that **joblessness** can undermine a young person's **economic prospects** and consequent **social mobility.** Nevertheless, this issue can be ameliorated by coordinated action between the state and the **private sector,** as we have seen, for instance, in Canada recently. When this is realized, we can see that other concerns are at least as serious.

Foremost among these is perhaps the issue of age **demographics**, whereby young people bear

the burden for an increasingly elderly population with high **longevity**. This means that young people will pay higher taxes and work longer hours, possibly forcing them to **migrate** to countries where this pressure is lower. The effect of this is the '**brain drain**' situation which can be seen in southern Europe, where young, ambitious people prefer to leave their countries altogether, exacerbating the problem for those remaining.

Furthermore, we must remember that a substantial proportion of young people globally face **existential threats** such as **famine, drought** or **outbreaks** of disease. These problems are often caused by (or are compounded by) **civil war, political instability** or the **corruption** of people in power locally. Such risks are a danger to their safety in addition to their **livelihood**, and so would appear to be far more serious than unemployment.

To conclude, it seems logical to accept that joblessness is a major challenge for young people. However, persistent trends in demographics among **developed countries** and the presence of physical dangers in **developing countries** should be regarded as at least as severe.

(290 words)

Explanation of the topic vocabulary and examples in Speaking

a challenge = a problem or difficulty to be faced

The West faces many challenges due to its ageing population.

economic or political instability = a rapid, unmanaged change in a country's economy or political situation

Economic instability causes many people to move abroad to seek reliable work.

social unrest = riots, protests or fighting by the public against each other or the government

Social unrest is spreading from the countryside to the cities, and the police are not responding.

an issue = a topic, subject or question that must be considered

The issue of petrol price inflation is not often discussed in the media.

pressing matters = urgent, important issues

I could not go to the college reunion because of more pressing matters at home with my family.

joblessness = a synonym for 'unemployment'

Joblessness among older people is actually higher than among recent graduates.

economic prospects = the future possibilities for a national economy

The economic prospects for very small countries are quite positive these days.

social mobility = the ability of people to progress in terms of salary, lifestyle and social status

The greatest aid to social mobility is good education and training.

the private sector = private businesses, as opposed to 'the public sector' meaning state-owned or controlled services

I definitely want to work in the private sector after I graduate. It is a more stimulating environment than the public sector.

demographics = the changes in society in terms of age, income, numbers, origins and location in a country

Demographic changes in Scandinavia have been dramatic, with substantial immigration and an ageing indigenous population.

longevity = the tendency to have a long life expectancy

Japanese people have perhaps the highest longevity in the world.

to migrate = to move permanently between countries

Migration within the Eurozone is a highly controversial issue at present.

'**brain drain'** = the tendency for intelligent or successful workers to migrate out of a country (usually expressed in quotes '')

Southern Europe is experiencing a high 'brain drain' these days, because of the lack of economic prospects.

existential threats = a threat to existence or life

The economy of my country faces an existential threat from collapsing oil revenues.

an outbreak = the start of a widespread problem such as disease or conflict

The outbreak of Ebola is a great concern for doctors globally.

civil war = war between people inside a country

It will take many years for our nation to recover from the civil war of the 1990s.

livelihood = the way a person makes a living

Many villagers sell handicrafts, as this is the only livelihood they can find.

developed countries = countries considered to have advanced economies, industries and social infrastructure

Developed countries contribute aid to those nations affected by famine.

developing countries = countries not generally considered to be fully developed yet

Illiteracy is a huge challenge for developing countries to overcome.

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Topic 8: Cities and infrastructure

About Topic 8

The **cities and infrastructure** topic includes the organisation of urban transport, communications and housing, trends in city life, social problems associated with cities such as overcrowding and petty crime, the growth of cities, possible future developments in city living, and comparisons of urban and rural lifestyles.

This topic is often used for Task 2 Ideas>problem/solution and Ideas>cause/effect type essays. There is also sometimes a connection to Topic **9 Countryside and agriculture,** so you may need to combine vocabulary from the two topics.

Topic 8 example Task

Transport delays and long journey times are a widespread phenomenon in many cities today. What are the causes of this problem, and how could the situation be improved?

Explanation of the Task

This is an Ideas>Mixed>Causes/solutions type essay. It does not ask for your opinion, but wants you to suggest some ideas about the causes of a problem situation and also some possible solutions. You should introduce the topic, describe two or three causes, then two or three solutions, and then summarise.

Task 2 sometimes mixes Cause/effect and Problem/solution Tasks in this way. You should read the Task very carefully to see if it is a 'mixed' type. The word 'problem' does not *necessarily* mean it is a Problem/solution Task!

Band 9 model essay

Transport is an essential part of **urban** life, and lengthy journeys are frustrating and expensive for those concerned. There appear to be two main causes of this, and several possible solutions, as we will explain here.

Perhaps the main cause is the lack of **investment or funding for infrastructure** in the form of **high-capacity public transport** and increased road space for private vehicles. This means that too many vehicles use the existing network, and **congestion** is inevitable. We see this in most large cities globally, such as London or Tokyo. Many **conurbations** also lack finance for **transport hubs**, such as integrated road and rail **facilities** which could connect public and **private transport**, thus reducing **bottlenecks**. A further cause seems to be the problem of **overcrowding** in cities, whereby people migrate from the **hinterland** and **settle** in urban areas, putting strain on **amenities**, housing and above all on transport capacity. This means that an already stretched system is often pushed to a critical point, causing cancellations and breakdowns in the technology used, especially in situations of **urban sprawl** such as in Latin America.

Regarding potential solutions, probably the main remedy would be to encourage investment in

better infrastructure, for example through subsidies or **public-private partnerships** as was tried successfully in Germany during the 1990's. This enhances the network and fosters a sense of **civic pride**, to everyone's benefit. Another solution may be to use **tax incentives** to allow more **home working**, so that there is less need to **commute** from the **suburbs** to the **inner city** for work. A final response might be the development of more flexible patterns of transport, such as **communal car-pooling**, which would reduce reliance on existing systems and vehicles.

In conclusion, it seems that **outdated** infrastructure and overcrowding are the key factors behind our transport frustrations. Possible solutions would involve better funding, and also **innovations** in ways of working and travelling to reduce the **burden** on the system.

(311 words)

<u>Explanation of the topic vocabulary and examples in Speaking</u>

urban = adjective meaning 'about cities'

Urban crime is a great concern for the authorities in most countries today.

investment or funding = money to pay for an activity, either from government or business

My home town secured investment from a charity for a new stadium, and funding from a local company for sponsorship.

infrastructure = the physical and system organisation of a city, area or country, especially in terms of transport and communications

The UK railway infrastructure dates back to the 1860's in many places.

high-capacity = able to handle high volumes of goods or people

Sea container ships are high-capacity international freight providers.

public transport = transport such as buses and trains funded by the state (as opposed to 'private transport' such as cars owned by individuals)

I usually get to work by public transport, even though it's very crowded.

congestion = situation of too much traffic, causing delays (the phrase 'traffic jam' is not generally used in Academic English)

I have to leave home very early in the mornings, because of the congestion on the way to my college.

conurbations = very large cities which have absorbed other towns

Sao Paolo is a huge conurbation in Brazil, and is still expanding.

transport hubs = centres where many routes converge

Heathrow airport is the largest transport hub in Europe.

facilities and **amenities =** places providing any service to the public, either private or public sector

My home city has many amenities such as swimming pools and parks, and several facilities for elderly people such as care homes.

a bottleneck = a place where congestion regularly happens

The connection from a motorway to a local road is always a big bottleneck.

overcrowding = a situation where too many people try to live in one place

Hong Kong has managed its overcrowding problem very skilfully.

hinterland = the area around a city affected by its development

I live in the hinterland of our capital city, where we regularly go for shopping and for work projects.

to settle in a place = to move and live there permanently, usually with work and a family

I was born in Asia, but my parents settled in the USA when I was very young.

urban sprawl = the situation where a city expands and buildings are constructed without control or laws

Urban sprawl has resulted in the rapid expansion of many Asian cities, with resulting damage to the environment.

public-private partnerships = projects funded jointly by the government and business, to reduce the cost to the taxpayer

My country has just installed a new tunnel under the central mountains, run by a public-private partnership.

civic pride = the pride felt in the town/city where you live, its people and infrastructure

As a symbol of civic pride, we built a new park zone with sports amenities and educational exhibitions.

tax incentives = reductions in tax to encourage people to do or buy something

We should use tax incentives to encourage more people to try using their own solar panels at home.

home working = working in your home for all or part of the week

Home working can be quite an isolated way to do your job.

to commute = to travel a long distance to work every day

I live in the suburbs and commute by train to the city centre.

suburbs = the residential areas around a city

Life in the suburbs can be rather boring, to be honest.

the inner city = the older, central part of a city

Inner city housing is often overcrowded and noisy.

communal car-pooling = a voluntary system for people to travel in a shared car, to reduce fuel use

I tried car-pooling, but it was difficult to arrange the journeys with three other people.

outdated = old-fashioned and not relevant today

I find that our political parties are very outdated these days.

innovations = new ideas or things (which are usually useful or exciting)

Mobile computing was one of the great innovations of the last ten years.

a burden = a weight or responsibility which is difficult to cope with

The burden of income tax is much too high these days for normal people.

***

Topic 9: Countryside and agriculture

About topic 9

The **Countryside and agriculture** topic covers social and physical changes in the countryside, rural versus urban lifestyles, ways of using the countryside, and methods of farming including animals and crops.

It may seem surprising, but agriculture is actually one of the most common topics in IELTS across the Writing, Reading, Speaking and Listening tests. This means that you should definitely learn to use agriculture vocabulary as part of your exam preparation, even if the subject is not personally interesting for you.

Topic 9 example Task

It is sometimes said that the countryside offers a high quality of life, especially for families. What are the arguments for and against families choosing to live and work in the countryside, for example as farmers? What is your own view about this?

Explanation of the Task

This is an Opinion>Discussion type Task. You should introduce the topic, present two or three ideas on each side of the discussion, and then give your opinion in the conclusion.

The Task asks you specifically to think of families and the example of farmers, so you should include some ideas about this. Always check carefully to see if the Task has any extra or specific instructions such as this – if you miss these, it may affect your score badly.

Band 9 model essay

There can be few choices in life more important than where to settle as a family, and the question of an urban or **rural** location is complex. There are strong arguments for and against living in the countryside, as we will discuss now.

On the one hand, it might be said that the countryside is rather a **backwater**, with fewer cultural amenities than a city in the form of museums, theatres and even sporting events. This may mean that families become isolated, especially as **rural depopulation** leaves fewer **country dwellers** in the area, as we see, for example, in central France. Added to this is the **scarcity** of schools and colleges, meaning that children may need to travel long distances for their education. Finally, career options may be more limited in the countryside for both parents and children, resulting in **rural unemployment** and long-term **rural poverty** in the worst cases.

Conversely, life in the countryside has rewards which go beyond **material considerations.** For example, the **abundance** of natural resources such as land, **wildlife forestry and water bodies** means that a comparatively simple life can be lived at a **subsistence** level. Many country residents are **self-sufficient smallholders** in this sense, safeguarding them from the changes in **the wider economy** which can **afflict city dwellers**. If the parents are farmers, children learn the importance of

animal husbandry, methods of farming such as **crop rotation and** irrigation, and generally may become more in tune with the natural world as a result. Finally, as technology enables children to undertake distance learning or **remote viewing** of cultural attractions such as museums, they should be less isolated from their cultural heritage.

Overall, it seems to me that quality of life in the countryside today is indeed quite high, with its advantages of resources, self-sufficiency and **environmental awareness**. This is especially true now that communications are reducing the risk of isolation in such **far-flung** communities.

(317 words)

Explanation of the topic vocabulary and examples in Speaking

rural = the adjective for 'countryside'

I come from a rural area originally, although these days I live in our capital city.

a backwater = an area of a country where little of interest happens

I used to live in an agricultural town, but frankly it was such a backwater that I moved to one of the larger cities.

rural depopulation = the long-term trend for people to migrate from the countryside to cities, leaving the rural areas with few people

Rural depopulation can cause huge problems with local infrastructure, as there aren't enough people to run the services and transport.

country dwellers = people who live in the countryside ('city dwellers' = people who live in cities)

My parents were country dwellers when they first married, but now we all live in a coastal town.

a scarcity = a lack or shortage of something

The worst problem I experienced in the countryside was a real scarcity of sports events and music festivals.

rural unemployment = unemployment affecting rural workers specifically

Rural unemployment has been ameliorated by innovative Internet start-ups.

rural poverty = being extremely poor in the countryside

Rural poverty is a long-term situation exacerbated by lack of infrastructure and training.

material considerations = concerns about money and material possessions

You can't only think of material considerations when deciding who to marry, I feel.

an abundance = a very high level of supply or availability of something

In the mountains, there's an abundance of wild flowers and goats.

wildlife = animals living naturally in the wild

It's surprising how much wildlife you can see in the suburbs in Australia.

forestry = the industry of growing and cutting trees

When I graduate, I want to work for a responsible forestry company.

water bodies = inland areas of water (rivers, lakes, reservoirs etc)

My country is very arid and has almost no water bodies.

subsistence = adjective meaning 'producing just enough to live on'

Subsistence farmers grow their own food but have little left to sell for profit.

self-sufficient = not needing to import or buy resources from outside the farm or country

During the war, our country became self-sufficient in crops and fuel.

smallholders = farmers managing very small farms, usually with their families

I worked on a project training smallholders in South America in how to lobby politicians for reform.

the wider economy = the national economy in a country

My business is growing, despite the decline in the wider economy.

to afflict = to affect (used for problems or diseases)

Many forests in my area are afflicted by wood disease which attacks the trees.

animal husbandry = the skill of keeping animals

My sister studied animal husbandry at college and enjoyed it enormously.

crop rotation = the process of using different fields each year to keep the soil healthy

Some smallholders do not practise crop rotation, and so their land becomes infertile.

remote viewing = viewing places by Internet, not in person

I took a remote viewing tour of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and found it very impressive.

environmental awareness = an understanding of environmental issues

Environmental awareness is part of the school curriculum these days for most children.

far-flung = remote or far away

My fiancé lives in a very far-flung village, but we keep in touch by Skype.

***

Topic 10: Government and the authorities

About Topic 10

The **Government and the authorities** topic mostly includes law and order, crime and policing, justice and punishment. Occasionally the Task may refer to ways of managing public services, and relations between countries.

The Tasks may ask about public policy in terms of funding (Eg 'How should prisons be run – by governments or by private organisations?') but will not ask for your political views or about actual events in specific countries.

Topic 10 example Task

Some observers say that police officers should be recruited from the communities where they work, so that they have local knowledge. Other people say that this is unnecessary, or even undesirable. Where do you stand on this debate? Is local knowledge essential in modern policing?

Explanation of the Task

This is an Opinion>Personal viewpoint Task. You should introduce the topic and give your opinion in the introduction, then explain why you have this view. You should briefly consider the opposing view, then restate your opinion in the conclusion. The Task has the specific instruction to decide if you think local knowledge is 'essential,' so you should refer to this as part of your opinion.

Band 9 model essay

The need for effective, **trustworthy** police officers is **paramount** in society today, especially as criminals become more **devious** and creative. Regarding whether police should be locally hired, there is a case to be made on both sides of the debate.

Those who support local recruitment of officers point to the need for the police to understand the **minutiae** of the local community. For example, a community may have certain **frictions** or a history of a specific **grievance**, whether religious, political or otherwise. In such situations, the argument goes, the police need to show **sensitivity**, and also be able to anticipate the kinds of crimes that may be **committed**. Furthermore, local officers may find it easier to gain **informants** in the community, leading to stronger **evidence** at **trials**, higher **conviction** rates and a **deterrent** to crime through **sentencing, imprisonment, fines** or **community service** leading to **rehabilitation** of the **offender**.

On the other hand, it seems likely that officers from the community may in fact share some of the **tendencies** of the people they grew up with. For example, in countries such as Mexico, we see a high incidence of **corruption** among the local business and government community which is equalled by **bribery** among the police. A second objection is that local sensitivity may lead to the police failing to **enforce laws** fully, and effectively making exceptions for some offenders, which is

unequitable towards **law-abiding** citizens. Finally, we must remember that police officers should have **transferable skills**, such as **lateral thinking** and **investigative** ability, which should **transcend** their background or the environment they are working in.

Overall, it seems to me that local knowledge is not absolutely essential for the police, whose skills should be effective in any **context**. Indeed, I agree with those who say that the risks of local recruitment **outweigh** the benefits, because of the danger of corruption and **over-familiarity** with potential offenders.

(318 words)

<u>Explanation of the topic vocabulary and examples in Speaking</u>

trustworthy = capable of being trusted

In most countries, politicians are regarded as untrustworthy and possibly corrupt.

paramount = of the greatest importance

It is paramount that we find a solution to the problem of Internet piracy.

devious = extremely clever in a dishonest way

Online criminals today are devious, and use many different methods to deceive their victims.

minutiae (pronounced 'my-new-shy') = small details

Nobody really understands the minutiae of the new tax code.

grievance = an issue which makes people upset or angry for a long time

Some towns in the countryside have a grievance with central government because of land reform laws.

sensitivity = being alert to the circumstances of a specific group of people

Teachers should show sensitivity to students who have language difficulties.

to commit an offence/a crime = to do it

The President committed murder when he arranged for his opponent to be assassinated.

informants = people who tell the police useful information about criminals in their area

The police paid the informant for information about who organised the riots.

evidence = material presented in court to prove that someone is guilty or innocent

The police had a lot of DNA evidence against her, but no witness statements.

a trial = the legal procedure of prosecuting someone for a crime

A murder trial can last for many weeks and cost millions of Euros to conduct.

conviction rates = the percentage of accused people who are convicted of (= found to be guilty of) a crime

Conviction rates for burglary are low; only about 30% of trials result in a conviction.

a deterrent = something that makes people *not* want to do something (verb = to deter)

We have a guard dog as a deterrent against intruders at night. It deters people from coming into our garden.

sentencing = the action of telling a convicted criminal what the punishment is
(verb = to sentence)

Imprisonment = punishment by being in prison

He was sentenced to five years imprisonment for the armed robbery of a shop.

A fine = money paid as a punishment

The fine for speeding in my country is about 200 Euros.

community service = punishment by doing manual work for the public

Her community service consisted of cleaning the town parks and sweeping litter in the streets.

rehabilitation = the process of changing a criminal's character so that he does not commit more crimes (verb = to rehabilitate someone)

Some prisons use music and drama to rehabilitate offenders. Others say there is no point in trying.

an offender = a person who commits an offence

The government should provide training for offenders in prison, so that they don't turn to crime again when they leave.

tendencies = inclinations due to your character (usually negative)

Some young people in cities have tendencies towards graffiti and vandalism.

corruption = the crime when an official breaks laws to help people that he knows

Corruption is widespread in the police in some developing countries.

bribery = the crime of giving money to officials to get something done (verb = to bribe someone)

I had to bribe a customs inspector to get my luggage through the airport.

to enforce laws = to apply them to people

The police are not enforcing the laws about dropping litter in public. They should arrest more people for this.

unequitable = unfair or different for different groups

It is unequitable to arrest young people for speeding, but not older people.

law-abiding = following all the laws in a proper way

I am a law-abiding citizen. I never break the speed limit or any other laws.

transferable skills = skills that can be used in different situations

I have transferable skills which I use in both my professional career and my fund-raising work for charities.

lateral thinking = the ability to think creatively and in new ways

Facebook and Google are great examples of companies that have grown on lateral thinking.

investigative = adjective from ‘to investigate’ = to enquire about the causes of a crime or a problem

The police refused to investigate the Prime Minister, leading to accusations of corruption.

to transcend a situation = to be bigger or go beyond it

The need for reducing financial waste transcends the government – everybody should be

spending money more carefully.

a context = a specific situation

Armed police evidently work well in the American context, but would be less effective in a British context.

to outweigh = to be more important than

The advantages of having a diesel car outweigh the costs.

over-familiarity = when an official is too friendly with the public

We should discourage over-familiarity between judges and lawyers, because it could lead to corruption.

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Developing your IELTS vocabulary

That completes our explanation of the ten IELTS topics. It's very important now to try to start using these words in your speaking and writing as much as possible.

In addition to reading this book, try to maintain an interest in the ten IELTS topics by reading articles, posts and stories on these subjects in the media. This will let you see further examples of how these words and phrases are used, and may also show you some further vocabulary which you can use. Reading about the topics will also give you evidence, examples and statistics which you can include in your IELTS essays and spoken answers, showing the examiner that you are well-informed and able to use sources to support arguments.

Overview: The IELTS Academic Task 2 essay types

There are two possible types of IELTS Academic Task 2 writing Tasks: OPINION Tasks and IDEAS Tasks. Let's explain the difference, because this is very important.

Firstly, there are OPINION Tasks, which ask for your opinion on a topic, such as whether you think something is good or bad. These OPINION Tasks take two forms.

Some of these are OPINION > DISCUSSION Tasks, which typically say *'Some people think that X is a good thing, while other people disagree. Discuss both sides and give your own view.'* Remember that the exact words used could be different (for example, it might say *'consider both aspects'* or similar) but the concept will be the same. In these OPINION > DISCUSSION Tasks, you should write about each side of the discussion, and finally give your opinion at the end of your essay.

The other type of OPINION Task is the OPINION > PERSONAL VIEWPOINT Task. These Tasks typically say *'X is a good thing. To what extent do you agree with this statement?'* Again, the exact words will often vary (for example, it might say *'Many people support the suggestion of X. How far do you support this proposal?'*) but the concept will be the same. In these OPINION > PERSONAL VIEWPOINT Tasks, you should state your personal viewpoint at the *beginning* of the essay, and then explain why you have this opinion.

The second type of Task are IDEAS Tasks, which ask you to think of some ideas on a topic (such as the reasons for a problem or some ways to solve it) or to evaluate a situation. In these IDEAS Tasks, you will get high marks for thinking of a number of ideas on the topic, but you will lose marks if you give a strong personal opinion.
The common IDEAS Tasks are IDEAS > PROBLEM/SOLUTION, IDEAS > CAUSE/EFFECT and IDEAS > EVALUATE.

Sometimes, an IDEAS type Task will mix different elements, for example by asking you about Problems and Effects or about Causes and Solutions.

This book has examples and explanations of all these types.

In the exam, you should analyze the Task carefully *before* you start writing, to make sure you understand which type you need to write. Ask yourself: is this an OPINION or an IDEAS Task? Is it asking me to give my personal view, or is it asking me to think of some ideas on a topic? Which type of OPINION or IDEAS Task is it? Then you should spend a few minutes planning your essay with some simple notes.

Don't try to write anything very different in structure from the models in this book. These model essays are exactly what the examiners want to see from you. Read our model essays, and then practice writing your own essays in a similar way.

The most common mistakes in IELTS Writing

Using contractions (for example *'I don't think'* or '*We can't say'*) **instead of the full form** ('*I do not think'* or '*we cannot say.'*) Never use contractions in academic writing.

Writing too few words. If you write much less than the required word count, the examiner has to reduce your score, even if your essay is good quality. You should count the number of words in your essay after each paragraph and keep a continuous total; this way, you can be sure of reaching at least 250 words in 40 minutes.

Writing too many words. The examiner is paid to mark on an 'essay per hour basis,' and so will not read the end of an essay if it exceeds the minimum word count by more than about 100 words. This means he or she will not see the end of your argument, and your score will reduce considerably. Remember: 250 words minimum, and about 350 words maximum in Academic Task 2 writing.

Having handwriting that is difficult to read. IELTS is still a handwritten exam, and the examiners will not spend time trying to understand your writing. You must make sure that your handwriting can be read quickly. You should focus on writing clearly when you do your practice essays. Ask friends or other students to give you an honest opinion about whether your writing is easy to read.

Using informal words (for example 'a *nice* idea' or 'a *silly* thing to do') **instead of academic words** (for example 'a *positive* idea' or 'a *regrettable* thing to do.') Remember that academic vocabulary is different from the language you would use in English when talking to friends.

Giving personal opinion in an IDEAS type Task. Check if the Task is asking for your opinion or not. The first question you should ask yourself is '*Is this an OPINION or an IDEAS Task?*'

Telling stories about your personal history, friends or family. The Task tells you to use '*examples from your own experience*,' but this does **not** mean describing stories from your life or people you know! It means describing examples of things in the world that you know about, have studied or have learned about in the media.

Giving evidence which is too detailed or specific to a subject. You may be an expert in a particular social or scientific field, but the examiner probably has a different specialty. You need to make your ideas and examples accessible to a general reader. For example, if the Task topic is about money and you are an accountant, do not use specialized accounting terms.

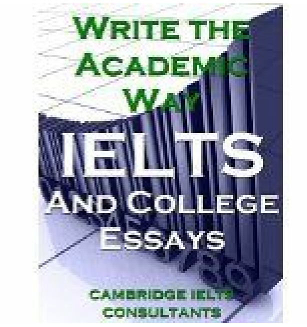
Being emotional or too dramatic when giving your opinion in an OPINION Task. You may feel strongly about issues such as animals or crime, but academic writing must be unemotional. So avoid phrases such as '*a disgusting idea'* or '*I detest this concept*.' It is much better to say '*an unacceptable idea'* or '*I disapprove of this concept*,' which is more impersonal and academic; similar to the type of writing that people use in business reports or university essays.

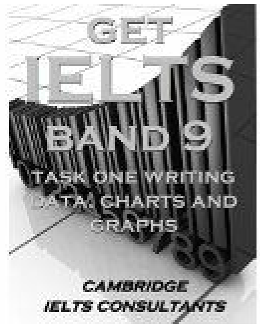
Not following the basic structures presented in this book. The examiners want to see a clear, well-structured essay that is easy to read. They are accustomed to seeing the structures we have presented in this book, and they will feel more positive about your essay if they can recognize these structures in what you write.

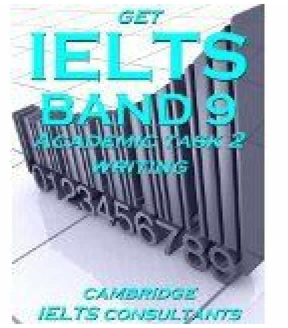
Give the examiners what they want, and they will reward you with a high score, even if there are some grammatical mistakes in your English.

More from Cambridge IELTS Consultants

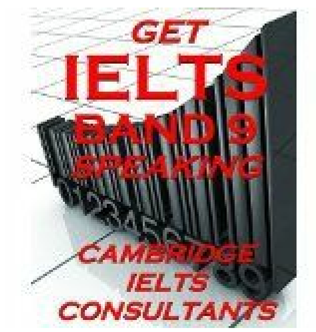
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